Happy Days
at
Little Oak Ranch
(Vaca Valley)

Boyhood Memories and
notes of later days —
the plain, the hills, the
trees, birds and flowers.

by

W. L. Jepson

Vol. 2.

1942 ▫

– Went to call on Dan Foree, neighbor boy and schoolmate of long ago, down in Oakland. Dan said: "The school at Oilers was held in the church. That was my first school. My first teacher was Aitken H. Vail (he married Hattie Williams, sister of Frank Williams). Next: C. Chaynes (afterwards a physician); Miss Taylor (the seats of pews were high, my feet could not touch the floor; so, getting tired I dropped down to floor and crawled under pews to back of school. The teacher passing by saw me and took me and put me under a table up front. I got tired of that punishment and as the teacher passed by I grabbed her skirt and held on fast. She looked down,

smiled and let me go back to my seat). She married —— Forester of Rio Vista. There was a big oak tree in front of the school. Down the creek below Caleb Wells' place lived a family, the Marshall family with boys. One of these boys was a tall strapping fellow and he would reach up and set his lunch bucket or school bucket in a hole of the tree. A few years ago I visited the site of the school. The oak tree is still there and I noted the hole where the Marshall boy set his lunch pail.

The Christian Church was built at Oiler's in 1854. It was moved to Vacaville in 1872. Center School was built in 1868. The first teacher at Center School was Hiram Davis Connell. He

was also a preacher. I remember that well, because on the first day of school one boy exclaimed: "The teacher is a preacher"! Next teacher, Jerome Banks with the red whiskers. Next: Chas. C. Conrad; Allan P. Sanborn (of the Benicia family; afterwards County Superintendent of Schools); W. P. Welsh; —— Terry; David Meyers; (O. D.? Willis;) Jeff Meyers. Then last three taught only a part of the school year (probably)*. Emerson Wood was there after I left.

"I went to the school at Oiler's in 1866. I left Center School in 1874, and went to the People's† in the town. The People's School was next the Christian Church south of the plaza; it started 1½ years. After that

* 3 in one term.

I went to the college.

At Center School there were 50 pupils. One day the quats were so bad the windows and doors were closed against them. The atmosphere was so stifling that Frankie Jefson fainted. Melzi Rogers went and got the Rogers family carriage and took Frankie home — to the ranch where is now Elmira. Frankie did not come to school next day; but Mary Jefson came. Dan asked the name of the new girl and Leand Williams said: Mary Jefson.

The teacher O. J. Willis married Virginia ("Ginie" = "Jennie") Rodgers. Her father = Tom Rodgers, brother of George, and James ("Jim") Rodgers. Children of Tom Rodgers = Melzi, Walker, George the

hunchback, Cecilia and Virginia.

"Jim" Rogers, sons = Commodore ("Commy") and Selden ("Seldie"). Sons of "Old Man Williams" = Jefferson ("Jeff"), Washington ("Wash"), Frank, Marshall ("Marsh"), Thomas ("Tom"). When Frank Williams' first wife died "Celia" Rodgers took care of the children.

"The bridge at Toree ranch built about 1867. I remember well when it was building. It was covered with milled lumber, tongue and groove redwood, and painted with a black asphalt paint.

"I was born in 1860.

"Eugene ("Gene") Marshall was a likeable lad. He lived afterwards at Martinez. He might be there still.

"I inspected the cornerstone of the old college when it was torn down. It was made of soft sandstone and the cavity for the documents lined with tin. The stone absorbed water, being porous, and the tin rusted. I cut out a piece of the corner stone for a relic and had it until a few years ago. I had also a picture of the school at Orilla.

"Tom Farce (father of Dan) came to California in 1850. He forded the Platte where stood Doc Tilden's home in

Vacaville (at which point there was later a bridge, opposite the brick warehouse on south bank). People forded the Alamo in a number of places above our ranch.

"Opposite the later Wilson place down Brock lane was the Fred Wise place. His name was originally Weisse. He married Jim Hankins' daughter. He "broke up" and his very fine farming machinery was sold. It made me sad. I remember seeing some of it come by our place.

"Olingers. Their daughter was Mrs. Hutton. The Huttons had four children: Fred, Will, Olin, Hattie. When I taught at Pena school, I remember coming home one day through Vacaville and I

saw a group of boys, about four, coming down from the grammar school long after regular afternoon hours of dismissal. They were yelling and carrying on, shouting "We have met the enemy and we are hisn"! Olin Hutton was one of them and so I said: What's the matter boys?" Olin replied: "Cooper [the teacher] licked us".

All the above from Dan Foree, Aug. 26, 1942. pp. 1-8.

Frankie Jepson went to the Peoples School one year. Josie Jepson at that time was in the College. The Williams that lived on the later Roberts place was named Marshall (= "Marsh"). He was a brother of Frank Williams. His wife was named Kittie. — Dan Foree.

— Letter from Charles Prather, June 5, 1942, praising Vaca Valley. See Japan Correspondence, 1942.

— Civil Wars. How long the trace of them lasts: inn signs in the west country of England: White Hart Inn; Ox Cow Hotel; Red Horse Inn — color relics of the Wars of the Roses, the white rose of York, the red rose of Plantagenet. cf. F. B. 51:29. The people have forgotten these wars — but they have not forgotten the Civil War in England, the bloody struggle between the Puritans and the Stuart kings.

— In the "old days" some girl would call out to one: "Got a trade last for you!" That meant that she had a compliment for you, not originating with herself but derived from some other

person. She was, in other words, passing along a compliment to you, but for a consideration! That is to say a trade last involves a bargain! You are to give her a compliment in exchange for the one you receive; not one made up by yourself! but derived, again, from another person. Trade lasts then involve passing along on a mutual basis, passing along to each other, nice things said about you by friends. The idea is to promote good will and friendly feeling amongst persons of good will. Such a practice undoubtedly Dr. Samuel Johnson would approve: of a similar incident he said: It promotes benevolence! It promotes benevolence!

One of the delightful girls at the old-time Berkeley Assemblies

was Joy Wilson. One evening she called out to me, in the passing dance, "Got a trade last for you"! – Sept. 3, 1942.

School Days.

"God give us bases to guard or barricades Games to play out, whether earnest or fun, Fights for the fearless and goals for the age, Twenty and thirty and forty years on"—

Follow Up: Harrow School Song.

Friday Afternoon Recitations

- Maud Muller

— Excursions about the countryside: cf. Men and Manners, 14:6.

— Books. One of the hectic best sellers when I was very small was East Lynne by Mrs. Wood. It seems to me I read it, but it left a bad taste. The portrayal of inferior or defeated passions disgusted me.

— The Buzzard. See Victoria, Lovell edition, p. 113.

Boone, Daniel, p. 115.

— Came to Little Oak on Monday Sept. 14, 1942. It was cool in the Bay region, but on nearing Pigeon Point one met north wind although there was no air movement. After reaching lower Vaca Valley, there was obvious north wind, a somewhat gentle breeze, but this was not needed to verify the first apprehension of it. The dry formless air, heated as from an oven, with its own peculiar quality, marks the days of ventus boreatis.* The North Wind is of many moods — gentle, placid, static or roaring like a lion in its tearing path of howling despair across the countryside, but always with a common quality of dry heat or tense rasping aridity.

Monday night the valley

* Classically: flamen borealis.

lay quiet, hours of breathless hot stillness, — a sort of gasping heavy silence.

My bed was placed in the open on a spot thick with dry grass near the most easterly Eucalyptus trees. It was perhaps one o'clock (the young moon had set) when a sharp intense explosion like a rifle shot awakened me. Instantly, without loss of time I got up and, in the darkness moved my bed with some inconvenience, for well I knew what the meaning of* that sound.

In periods of hot dry stillness large limbs suddenly give way, with an explosive report, in the crowns of Eucalyptus trees. In the morning

* in

the cause of last nights explosive noise was plainly visible. Lying on the ground by the roadway from the front gate to the cabin was a limb 12 feet long, a straight branch heavily plumed at top with numerous branchlets and very leafy. The whole thing weighed more than it was possible for me to lift. The break was a clean square break in sound wood! The straight limb or shaft came straight down, probably from one hundred feet up, its downward flight accelerated by the weight of the mass of foliage and branchlets. It made in the very hard dry ground a distinct hole. If striking a sleeping man, such a shaft would have pierced his body. — Sept. 15, 1942.

Cultivated Trees at Little Oak.

The Locust Trees are getting old, they are now seventy-five years old. Those at the former house site were badly injured by fire and are dead or dying. About half way between these trees and the Locust Trees in the chicken park spontaneous sprouts have arisen in the plowed orchard land - about 60 yards from possible origin. Is it old age of the individual that accelerates sprouting in this way? In the old years, when I was a lad and later, no sprouting at all do I remember.

Back of the chicken park are two Lombardy poplars which look like one. These trees are now 65 years old - now they are making a thicket of sprouts in the near-by orchard!

- Sept. 20, 1942.

- "From all wraiths and hings and things that go bang in the night, gude fairies protect us".

On Tuesday afternoon a scampering play-as-you-go whirlwind ran through the walnut grove, the pear orchard, the apricot orchard. Then came the south-west trades briefly, the north wind getting the upper hand again. But at sunset the trades again began and increased in force during the night. The roar of the wind - the trade wind - in the tall tops of the gum trees is, in the watches of the night, like the beat and surge of the ocean waves on wild rocky headlands, constantly and steadily increasing in force, rising to occasional crescendos - then falling suddenly to

breath-taking diminuendo like the soft lap of waters on lonely sunlit beaches. And why is not all this proper? proper and fitting in a wind bringing breath and courage from the blue Pacific's illimitable horizons? And so the wind rehearses in the tree tops the fury and might of the ocean, or anon sinks into mild cadences in the tops* of the orchard trees.

In the wind's fury all else is drowned — all night life is stilled and the roar is spent on the endless plain. Then at times the wind drops to zero and a wide hush settles on the valley floor, and once more the multitudinous chorous of cicadas, grasshoppers and night hawks

*branches

wake distant murmur. The great barn owl, in the very tree tops, turns to his mate and says: "Who are you? Who-o-o? Who-o-o?" He knows it is now his time to speak — because Master Wind will again lash the trees and limbs will come crashing.

The quotation that heads page 21 is from memory only and probably no part of it is right save "things that go bang in the night." I suspect it is Barrie, but need to trace it once more. — Sept. 17, 1942.

— Quercus lobata at Little Oak. The waif seedling at Little Oaks has now become a large tree and has been bearing acorns a long time. The flickers or woodpeckers have scattered the acorns

widely but in only one place has a stand of young trees resulted, that is in the old chicken park, an area gone wild where the grass mulch has accumulated on the ground undisturbed for many year, crafting a loose suitable protective loam in which a seed might find lodgement. The young trees, maybe a dozen, are about of one age and about 10 or 12 (or 16(!)) feet high.

Why did not the Valley oak spread out on this plain in pre-civilized days, under natural conditions? The plain was treeless and yet there were trees along the Alamo Creek only one-fourth mile away. Perhaps the birds roamed much nuts

only where there were trees, or not much beyond borders of wooded areas. The flickers go naturally to the old chicken park because there (at that place) are old forest trees. — Sept. 22, 1942. Doubtless there was no bedding loam on plain in the early days. — Populus fremontii. From the bridge over the Alamo at Force ranch down stream to the Jim Marshall line, perhaps nearly a half mile, the bed of the stream and the banks were, when I was a lad of eight, utterly destitute of trees — of cottonwood, of willow, of oak. For say near forty years (before my time as a lad, while I was a lad, and for some time after), the stream was wholly naked.

At this time, today, the stream is well wooded, especi-

ally with Populus fremontii and with some willow. Today, too, there is water in the Alamo, as much, I think, as when I was a lad. The water is sufficient to make nearly continuous pools in the bed, which with the overhanging foliage makes pleasing little vistas along the stream. — Sept. 22, 1942.

That there were no trees in this portion of the Alamo fifty or sixty years ago was due, I believe, to the close pasturing of the adjoining field and the creek bed by the foree cattle. This seems to me now the reasonable and only explanation. When a lad I thought little about it save that this portion of the creek seemed to my mind too sterile and rocky to grow trees.

A period in my native valley gives opportunity for unhurried reflection so that many matters take on definite form with a fixed or guiding objective. Hesitancy, doubt, irresolution vanish in the sight of the naked hills. — Sept. 29, 1942.

Early Day Cattle Brands in Vaca Valley

Geo. Samuels says: As a young fellow of seventeen I was put in charge of the range cattle in the Wooden valley region. The superintendent of the ranch was A. J. Rainey. He gave me my instructions regarding the handling and care of the cattle. One of the things I was told was to report any cattle on the range with strange brands. Our cattle

NC, the brand bore the brand [of the owner Nate Coombs. One day six strange cattle appeared on the range and I reported the matter to Mr. Rainey. He asked first for the brand and I told him the brand was an extremely large brand SID. There are Sidney Walker cattle from the other side of the Vaca ridge he said. Then he asked their condition and I replied that they were in excellent condition, rather better than the average of our own cattle. At that time we were pulling the best cattle out of the herds to put into the market. So Rainey told me to run the six SID steers in with the rest and the whole lot

were driven to the Lew Pierce ranch at the bridge in lower Suisun Valley where was the only scales for wrighing cattle at that time. A man named Tobin received the cattle and did the wrighing. After our cattle were corraled at that place, Rainey said to me: George, take out those six SID steers and run them into that small corral. Up to this time I had been wondering how honorable, to what degree my employer was on the square [in regard to these stray cattle. When he said this a light dawned on me. These cattle were wrighed separately and he directed Tobin to make out an order in favor of Sidney Walker of Vacaville. He explained they were strays but that it were impossible to drive those

steers back over the Vaca ridge to the Walker ranch in north Lagoon. Nor could it be possible for Walker to come after them. The order was made out, put into a letter and dropped into the mail at Mankas Corners. R.J. Rainey was a Kentuckian of the sort to whom honor is a cardinal element in their daily leaves. Such men had a fine contempt for bonds and written guarantees. Their word was always sufficient; they scorned the refinements of legal documents. When Sidney Walker received the cash order he was much surprised and much puzzled. When the matter was at last discovered to him, he communicated with Rainey and said: "It is plain money is owing you for passage." But Rainey refused to accept anything and so that incident closed.

Many years later, perhaps about 1909, the Walker ranges were cleared out and the cattle sold. At the end there still remained a few cattle in the hills and on Max Brazelton was put the task of getting them out. They had gone completely wild in the back ranges and the trouble of getting them corraled was enormous. This great trouble, Mr. Brazelton has told me, is associated in memory with the huge SID brand on their flanks, a brand very much larger than usual and fully eight inches high.

My interview with Geo. Sanders was at his ranch yesterday, Sept. 30, 1942.

Sid Walker's range ran to the top of the range and in some years he held leased range down into Gordon Valley.

The Hartley range covered the country behind Solenas Springs and on the valley flats south of the Pellejo Hills in the region of the old Poorhouse road. The brand was H.

Many owners used in the brand two or three initials of their name. Lee Gates brand was T. L. G. It may still be seen at the Brazelton place in Gates Canon. Atkinson who was a later comer had as a brand a simple cross "X"

George Samuels was born in 1861. The cattle were taken

to Suisun Valley about 1878.

The Long Family in Vaca Valley.

I interviewed my old friend Sallie Long as to the Long brothers, the brothers of her father Buck Long.

Willis Long was with one of the Fremont expeditions and left Fremont at Sutter's Fort. He came into Vaca Valley, say about 1842 or maybe 1844 or 1845. He told Sallie it was the most beautiful valley he had ever seen — it was rank with vegetation and abounded in game, in deer and bear and swarmed with all sorts of birds. He was a pleasant happy man without serious

objective but a handy man of sorts who could do various things with his hands, make a whistle for children and so on. He discovered gold on the Feather River but did not know the value of the shining particles

James (Jim) Long and William Buck Long kept a store at Long's Bar on the Feather River. Buck afterwards went into placer mining. He first settled in the Solenas Hills and then came to the present Long site in the fan of Gates Canyon in 1862.

There were eight brothers; but Sallie cannot name all of them or say which is the eldest. All eight were in California, and four stayed.

Garrard Long settled in Vaca Valley, Willis Long also; and one *, other. Buck Long ran into seven or eight years litigation regarding the title to his land and finally won out. Meanwhile his brothers disappeared - went away. When he won, they came back and Buck gave them back their land like an old nanny says Sallie.

There was an adobe formerly on the present home site.

Two brothers became physicians: Dr. Berry Long of Kansas City; Dr. Pope Long of Jamesville, Texas.

A sister was Harriet Liggion.

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* This may be Southey Whitting-ton Long, nicknamed "Dick".

Sallie says a "party" was given at her father's home while he was still a bachelor. One of the guests was a Decker girl; another guest was a son of "Grandpa Scoggins". In later years Buck learned that the Scoggins man had proposed to the Dekker girl on the porch that evening. A grandson of that union was Paul Scoggins, now chaplain at the Saint Helena Sanitarium.

- Sargeant, J., The Trees, Shrubs and Plants of Virgil. Oxford. 1920.
- Chemistry of the bark of Robinia prend-acacia. F. B. Power. See separate in separate box file and ref. to Pharm. Rundschau paper (pub. in N. Y.) on p. 1.
- Where Coburn road meets the railroad track, at that corner on the southwest side or southwest corner was a row of Black Locust trees - a short row. It is many years since those trees have disappeared - but at that place there is a conspicuous thicket of young Robinia growth - root sprouts galore. It would seem likely that when Black Locust once occupies a spot it may persist there indefinitely. - Sept. 8, 1944.

Cont. from p. 39

branch stations are probably to be found in villages.

In the U.S., there are more that 10,000 libraries at the present time with holdings of more than 200 million vols.* All this is extremely to the good. While many small libraries are filled with fiction, still the people read.

* Signs of the Times, 1-26-43

The Creeks

- There is water in the Alamo at the bridge by the Dickie place - as much water as in the old days sixty years ago - the pools of water are very pleasing and the vegetation is much ranker than in old days. There is no water in the Alamo at Neat Tate's place, no water at Jarrett bridge. The underground water at Dickie place is forced to the surface by the sandstone rock strata which comes near the surface there. - Oct. 2, 1942.

- When I was a lad of five, and before and for long after, there was not a public library in Solano Co. unless at Vallejo and that is doubtful. At the present time every town has a library and (Cont. p. 38)

On Thursday Sept. 24, 1942, I went with the Tates, Neal and Ralph, father and son, into the hills west of Little Oak, entering first Osage Canon. There is no Osage tree in the flat at mouth now; nor any Populus fremontii, although my remembrance runs to that effect as of sixty years ago. We went to head of Osage and at the very head, above the Oak woodland, found a Populus fremontii tree - a single large one standing by itself in a naked swale just under the divide of the ridge! A rather fine tree.

From here on to Buff Point, the highest point in the Araquipa Hills. Thence down through the woodland of Hawkins Canon, on the upper part of the steep south wall.

The grass is now very thick and the open hills are difficult on sharp slopes. In the woodland the grass is still thick though not so abundant; but the fallen oak leaves cover the ground thickly and on the steep slopes upset instantly your footing. On this steep hillslope I kept falling and at last Ralph Tate said: "You have lost a heel". So I had; from the right shoe. This made it almost impossible to go a yard or two without falling.

For sixty years I have been traveling on foot the hills and mountains of California. No remembrance stirs regarding the loss of a heel while on an expedition. So far as I can remember I

went into the high mountains for the summer with only one pair of shoes – the ones on my feet. It is my notion that shoes were better built in the old days. Most any good pair of shoes in those days was sound. What a disaster it would have been to have lost a heel when far back in the Sierra Nevada! Such a contingency never occurred to me!

It rather seems to me the experience of losing a heel has been mine a long time ago, but while at home, when it made little impression.

Stout shoes can be had nowadays, of course, but they cost more and must be selected with care.

– As I came driving down the Napa Valley, it was near September 1. The hay fields were clean of the garnered hay; the stubble fills the field where once was wheat; the crowns of the native trees show full maturity. There on the edge of the field is a clump of Eschscholtzia, its corollas now straw yellow, a sign of pleasant autumn days, a reminder that high heat has now gone past.

Some miles east of Oakville the road lies on the lowest edge of the foothills. The view down toward Yountville is most engaging. The little pointed hills thrust across the valley, irregularly placed and yet with a sort of order but diversified as to the the wooded slopes, as to

the fields of the valley floor, the grove and scattered clusters of the Valley Oak, the trim serenity of the blocks of orchard trees — all this combines to make a scene of quiet rural beauty that gratifies deeply the senses.

c. Aug. 31, 1942.

— Out-of-door days at Little Oak. cf. Men and Manners, vol. 14, p. 112.

— Natural History of the Farm, by James George Needham. In Biology Lib.

— On Saturday, November 14, it was a bit late before I stirred out of the cabin at Little Oak. I got up at 6:30; there was a little chill in the air but not much. Dressing and getting breakfast in the cabin I did not notice the cold much. Then about 7:45, on going outside on some errand, a great mass of sea-fog rolling in over Pigeon Point and flooding the Sacramento Valley lowlands, thrilled my gaze. It was dramatic — the great wall of fog, nearly a mile away, (lying) over the east end of the ranch — plainly following the Sacramento River bottom northward. To the south it did not cover the

Gonsalves place, but the Mile Square Hills were hidden under the flood. One small patch of fog lay on the crest of the Arequipa Hills just above Chandler Canon. It was clearly evident that Lagoon Valley beyond the Arequipa Hills was flooded because the fog poured through Lagoon Pass and covered the Davis Hills — the only considerable fog patch westerly. This phenomenon must represent sea fog — though in a way it acted like tule fog. The valley seems too dry still for tule fog, or valley fog as we sometimes call it. Moreover, the Davis Hill phenomenon, represented sea-

fog. Yet again, by 11 o'clock it had all gone seawards again — a character of sea fog. It was, while it lasted, an impressive spectacle; — the great body of it moved so rapidly up the Sacramento Valley.
— Nov. 14, '42

The orchards are now all bronze — more bronze than yellow as so commonly. The great crowns of the fig trees are, however, still green, only faintly touched by a yellowish cast in some places. The cottonwoods (Populus fremontii) along the Alamo show diverse heads, some still green, as the large tree in Dicks corral, some yellowing plainly but not yet fully colored. — Nov. 14, 1942. Little Oak.
— Orchards of the Sun. Thomson's Seasons, p. 68.

– On Saturday morning Jan. 16, 1943 I left Berkeley about 9:00 o'clock bound for Little Oak. A heavy fog lay over Berkeley, denser than I can remember hitherto. The fog continued, with some breaks (or rising into hills) as far as Fairfield or a little beyond – say halfway to Vanden. It was thin in the Suisun Valley. The countryside north of Vanden into Vaca Valley was fog free. This fog marked very well the Bay region climatic influence. South of Pigeon Point three or four miles the fog began.

At Little Oak it was for my stay, until Jan. 18, cold, dry, clear, with a bitter north wind. The snowy caps

of the Sierra Nevada could well be seen low in the sky in the direction of Elmira, over Elmira. But south of the line east from Little Oak no crests of Sierra were visible.

The fog along the shores of San Francisco Bay was so dense in places that the roadway was lost twenty feet ahead of the machine.

– Chairs. In the earliest pioneer days we had in the ranch house just two kinds of chairs: a wooden chair of "rounds" and "slats" with the seat an open network of rawhide strips one-half inch wide or a little less; and a grandfather's rocker. The rawhide chairs were spoken of as "tug-bottom" chairs. They were also called Campbellite chairs.

-Ukiah School boys, 1875-1880. We had no books to read or scarcely any. Not boys books. Many of the very best boys books ~~had not then~~ [born written. ~~now currently known~~] There was the college library in the college building on the hill. We had no access to it; but even had we its books would not have interested us. Well I remember the long rows of volumes on theology bound in sombre black. There were uniform sets of the English Poets, Dryden and many others, of the English essayists (the Spectator and so on) — all for scholars but nothing for boys of ten or twelve. So it was when a copy of James Capen

Adams, Grizzly Bear hunter and mountaineer appeared in our midst, its advent created the greatest excitement. It was instantly recognized by every boy as utterly genuine, as wholly authentic. Every word rang true and we well knew that there was a man who had himself again and again faced and fought with bears in the wilderness — right in our own Sierra mountains. It was breath-taking — this book. It carried us bodily into the cañons and forests and presented for our unflagging interest a close-up view of the real denizens of the mountains.

– "Nothing but the moral quality of actions can penetrate through vast intervals of time." – Emerson, Journals, p. 33, who says that Burke had previously the same idea.

– A fact was given me yesterday: high fog over Berkeley (covering the tops of the hills), a quiet air body or nearly so; a very high wind at Walnut Creek, blowing a strong gale. This bit of news from the janitor in my quarters at Life Sciences Building. So, at Little Oak, high southwest winds probably mean quiet air blocks in the Bay area. Certainly, high north wind at Little Oak may, *usually does mean stagnant air at Berkeley. – July 13, 1943.

* not usually.

The Alamo in Flood.

One day in mid-winter when the Alamo was in flood a never-to-be-forgotten incident occurred which now returns in memory. I was about five years old and I had gone to the Forge place to see one of the most wonderful sights ever. There on the banks of the Alamo were Will and Dan and Frank, all with long poles in their hands, the poler fitted at one end with grab hooks. Excitement reigned supreme. With the poles Will and Dan grabbed great logs of trees floating on the current of the water and attempted to bring them, to steer them into shore, while Frank made an effort to get a

line attached to the log for anchorage to the bank. The shouting, the cries, the warnings, the calling of directions gave a zest to the enterprise, so that it tended to take on the character of a sporting game. It was highly exciting and animated.

The Waterman Family.

Probably Mrs. Waterman was an Indian woman of full blood. Ben must have married her in the fifties, judging by the age of the eldest children. I liked much to go down Brock lane to play at the house where the Watermans lived, because the Waterman boys always had interesting

games. My father and mother did not like very well for me to go there. They considered the Watermans "low down". That was a term frequently used in those days. I have often wondered: Do parents really know anything about their children? There were boys in the grammar school, certain boys whom my people would never have objected to, and yet they were quite vile-minded. The Waterman boys I played with were healthy clean-minded young animals. The Waterman place, the house in which they lived, was a poor sort of house — there were many better looking ones in the neighborhood — but for me it had always a

peculiar fascination and I was sorry to see it disappear from the landscape; and to see the Watermans leave the neighborhood.
— May 5, 1943.

The country-side, in the spring and after harvest, had many itinerant laborers. They were not seeking work; they were passing through — going to the great ranches high up the valley, such as the Glenn ranch or maybe to the big mines. They carried a great roll of blankets and belongings on their back and moved very slowly over the country roads. The Standard Dictionary defines tramp as a verb: "To tramp or trudge wearily or laboriously." And so they were called, not tramps, but foot-tramps. The term had no relation to foot-pad as a robber or hold-up man.

These men were harmless laborers, probably never even guilty of petty thievery. They were beggars and came regularly to the back doors of farm houses for food. Sometimes they were asked to chop wood for the meal served them — a meal always served in a plate out the back door. But usually they were just given food without being asked to work. — Aug. 10, 1943.

— Came to Little Oak on Sat., July 1, 1944. Calm motionless silent days and nights like faery land. Then a high wind arose on Monday night, July 3 — a southwest trade. Well, then, I knew why my father, who disliked the heavy trades, had planted the walnut grove — a stand of the native California Black Walnut. (Cont. p. 59)

Native Trees

— Thos Nuttall in the Sylva N. Am. 2:79 says of the leaves of Acer macrophyllum, near a foot in diameter. Our maple trees are few and small leaved in this dry country. The broadest leaves noted are:

— cf. vol. 1, p. 199. (Happy Days etc)

— Populus fremontii. Pallays Hills north Pigeon Point.

1. One in Hewitt Canon
2. Two (maybe 3) in Round Hill Canon.
3. One in Winchell Canon.
4. One (or two) on flat in field, along gully, just east of foot of Round Hill Canon.

— c. June, 1943.

Cont. from p. 58. As I come to the cabin from the barn, the stillness under the protection of the grove, gives one a sense of wonder — in contrast to the roar of the wind outside.

A Holiday in 1884.

A Holiday in the Spring Time. Away! Away! To Weldon Cañon on a holiday. And so riding one's road mares away we go — a fair gleaming day in the spring time, — up the valley, through the orchards and then turning off the valley road onto a wagon trail leading into Weldon. Soon we are in the lower cañon, the Ukatis here a mountain brook brawling over boulder. Lom the every day world has been left far behind. The mountain sides glow with the Bush Monkey flower, the Eriophyllum, while on rocky wooded slopes hang clusters of the Golden Lily Bell. Here is the

freshness of creation. Here is the unspoiled primitive world. Here the mind is subtly stirred by the backward spaces of time.

Here are no fences, no corrals, no barns, no cattle, no human beings indeed but ourselves. All that is ugly, common and disorderly, is left far behind. Nature here shines at her best. One's boy's enthusiasm fills to the brim. Here is a world of new things, each with some association of its own, each with some center of interest. The mind is filled; the intellectual spirit is gratified; the sense of beauty deeply stirred. All thoughts, all feelings are absorbed by the scene. Time stands still.

— A boy loves sweets. Favorite foods [of the garden and orchard] were grapes, peaches, figs. Lord too was honey. Honey, good honey, is incredibly sweet. Sweet as honey is a proverb.

"Villa abundat lacte, caseo, melle." Cicero, De Senectute 16. The farm overflows with milk, cheese, and honey.

Cf. Pliny 11, 14, 14.

Virgil, Ecl. 4, 30. (roscida mella).

I have heard city person say honey is too sweet. So it may be when eaten alone. In the country milk was always used with honey, sipped with honey, and thus one wandered along fragrant happy lanes. Thus is one taken back to the biblical phrase, a land flowing with milk and honey, for such a land is also rich in

contentment and many delights.

Pliny (Nat. Hist. 11, 4, 5) speaks of honey as "a juicy substance remarkable for its sweetness, lightness and wholesomeness"..... "it affords us by its flavor a most exquisite pleasure" (11, 12).

— Today, October 15, 1943, I drove to Little Oak from Berkeley. In lower Green Valley, perhaps on account of the character of the morning light, I was much struck by the exact symmetry of the two summits of Twin Sisters Peak. It must have been the view from Green Valley which suggested the name. The two peaks are markedly unsymmetrical as seen from Suisun or Vanden. The North Peak is bulbous or rounded, the South Peak is pointed.

Twin Sisters was familiar

in boyhood years. We went to Suisun frequently and it was always in the view westward, the most prominent landmark in the region. Today I was much impressed by the different feeling given out by the mountain, so to speak, as one saw it from lower Green Valley. A certain element of lightness and beauty, set well upon it, features lacking in the massiveness of the mountain as seen from the eastward.

Also I made note of the Cottonwoods in the Pellejo Hills south of Pigeon Point:

1. One tree in Hewitt Cañon. (At bottom of this cañon stood long ago a small brick farm house.)
2. Two (maybe three) trees in Round Hill Cañon. (There is a "semi-detached" round hill at

foot of this cañon).
3. One (or possibly two in field (on flat) just east of Round Hill Cañon. These stand in a small gulch. One tree is certainly Populus fremontii, the other not so tall maybe a young very dense-headed tree.
4. One fairly large tree in Dickie Cañon behind the barn.

The above observations were made from Mile Square Hill on the Vanden road. I did not go and examine the trees. Clyde Whitman (Tarec ranch) who would know Cottonwood well, told me Cottonwoods are to be found in Dickie Cañon and in the field below as noted above. — Oct. 15, 1943.

— I went again, to Little Oak. There are at least two Cottonwoods in Hewitt Cañon. (See paragraph no. 1, p. 64.) Oct. 17, 1943.

— Cultivated Trees. Cont. from vol. 1, p. 196. The Locust sprouts from roots at a long distance from the parent tree. At Little Oak, a young sprout tree has started in the orchard half-way between the cabin and the pear granary site, either from the trees on the site of the old chicken park, or from the trees in the yard where was formerly the house; say, a distance of 150 feet. The tree might spread from seed but no such case at Little Oak is definitely known to me. Seed has for sixty years been produced yearly in abundance. There should then, if capable of spreading by seed at Little Oak, have been many seedlings. None are known actually as seedling trees. The seeds are very hard and probably germinate only under special conditions, special nursery treatment, here in this region.

The wood is very hard. When the Mexican cut down the dead or near dead trees at the cabin (see Vol. 17, p. 30, Men and Manners), I have him save me a section cut of the best trunk, about 9 inches long, to use for a wood block or wood anvil or chopping block in my little shop at 11 Mosswood Road, Berkeley. A dense hard wood, such as this, is suitable.

If I remember rightly the reference to Pharm. Rundsch., ante vol. 1, p. 196 (Happy Days) is in English, perhaps by Powers. If this periodical is not available, one may consult the medical botanies or the American Pharmacopoeias.

— Bellajo Hill. — Strong, massive, solid, bleak.

- Vacaville Schools.

Cf. letter to H.S. Cory, M.D., Feb. 16, 1942, in Japan Correspondence, vol. 47 (1942). Also letter from H.S. Cory, M.D. in same volume.

Wind.

A very heavy North Wind blew on Dec. 9 and 10, 1943 in the Sacramento Valley. It was very heavy here in Berkeley for one day. As it bore over the town it stood for power, force, violence so vast that man's means of resistance, or creation of a contrary force seemed inconceivably trifling and futile. This wind gives out something more than a sense of power — as if it meant to destroy or brush aside the idle obstructions in its way. Greater in sense of annihilation is it than any other natural force in California, unless possibly rivers in flood.

Destruction in the home valley was great: roofs blown off; chimneys blown down;

trees blown over; windmills wrecked — according to the Vacaville Reporter, Dec. 17, 1943. In addition were the worst fires ever known in December: ten to fifteen thousand acres burnt, of cattle and sheep range, between Vacaville and Fairfield in the region of Sid Starks place. Many sheep (c. 1000) lost in the fire; ranch houses and barns burnt. In a few days I go to the Valley to see what damage at Little Oak. — Dec. 20, 1943.

— One of the popular novels when I was little: "East Lynne", Mrs. Henry Wood. Sold over ½ million copies in England alone; cf. Dictionary of National Biography. "Hard Cash" was another. East Lynne published in 1861. (cf. 78.).

— The marvels of Suisun. cf. letter to Annie M. Alexander, May 5, 1944, in Jepson Correspondence.

Dear Mrs. Harbison. —

Your letter was far from "remembering too much" and there was none of it to be be "skipped" The names of the Williams family set up old-time echoes in my mind but I could not have named any of those older ones now save one or two. Apparently you account for all three of Jedidiah Williams' daughters: one married Jim Rodgers as you say; one married Tom Rodgers; Hattie married Vail. I am a bit interested in Tom Rogers' children. I think there were two girls, one being named "Celia" or at least called Celia. This girl took care of Frank Williams' family after his first wife died. The name of the other girl ought to come back to

memory but does not now. She married the school teacher at Center School, O. P. Willis. Or it may have been "Celia" that married Willis. One or the other did. These two girls had at least one brother, George Rodgers (named, doubtless, for his uncle, the father of the present Belle Rodgers). This George Rodgers was a hunch-back. As you know some hunchbacks are not very misshapen, but Geo. Rodgers was an extreme hunchback, possessing a mind deeply saturated with the embittered feelings traditional with that type of physical defect. All of us in Center School (save my sister Mary Elizabeth) were terribly afraid of his cutting tongue. I well remember that all the Frank Williams boys

took aid to his sullen temper in the most ingratiating manner.

Geo. Rodgers, the brother of Jim, did not come in the same train as Jim. He came later. His party was one of those on the Overland Trail that arrived at the last barrier, the Sierra Nevada, broken and famished. I will remember my mother saying how good Jim Rodgers was to his brother George. Jim went across the valley and into the Sierra Nevada, carrying supplies and driving extra animals in order to succor George and assist him into California. Your description of the dinner party at Jedidiah Williams' house is especially interesting. That must have been about the year 1871. My grandmother Elizabeth Potts was the wife of John Potts, a Confederate soldier

who served the full four years of the Civil War in the army of General Price. At the end of the war he surrendered with the rest and gave up his arms. In that border warfare one made many enemies. Six months after the war closed he was called to the front door of his home and instantly shot down. So you see there was a reason why my grandmother was wearing a black lace cap at that dinner party.

Now that I have written this I see on re-reading your letter that I have gone astray on Tom Rogers' family. Geo. Rogers, the hunchback, could not have been Tom Rogers' son, according to your account. Alas, I have occasionally by slip, used an alternative

spelling for Rogers.

I must try to find out where the hunchback comes in.

As you say consumption took terrible toll of the Williams family. The young Jedidiah went that way. He is the hero of one of my stories of the old school - the best of the stories I think - if any be any good.

One of the Williams boys, a son of Jedidiah, started out to enlist in the Confederacy, riding horseback by the southern route. At the head of the San Joaquin Valley he was shot in the back and killed.

My story of little Jedidiah reflects something of the spirit of the Civil War.

I now find a record from Dan Farrar, received since my letter went to you, saying:

Children of Tom Rogers = Melzi; Walter; George the Hunchback; Cecilia ("Celia") and Virginia ("Ginie" or sometimes "Jennie").

My best thanks for your highly interesting letter. Your pains in recording old-time facts is highly appreciated.

My best wishes to you for the New Year. My happy remembrance to all the Harbisons and to the Powers family as well.

Sincerely Yours
Willis Linn Jepson

To Mrs. L. J. Harbison,
Vacaville, Calif.

– Cordelia Hotel, built in 1856, burned Oct. 5, 1945.

11 Masswood Road,
December 28, 1943.

My dear Jeff. –

What whopping good cookies you sent me for Christmas! I love them. There is none I like better. My heartiest thanks and my best wishes for the New Year. It is a fine thing you know what a fellow likes.

Your Neighbor
Willis Linn Jepson

To Master Jeff Russell,
3 Orchard Lane, Berkeley.

[I sent Jeff before Christmas a basket of California Black Walnuts from Little Oak, explaining in what way my little brother and myself played Indian in the Walnut grove and ate the kernels of the nuts as did the Indians.]

"Now, in the knowledge of the works of nature, matter of, I would have thee study that exactly; that so there be no sea, river, nor fountain of which thou dost not know the fishes; all the fowls of the air; all the several kinds of shrubs and trees, whether in forest or orchards; all the sorts of herbs and flowers that grow upon the ground. — Francois Rabelais, Works, 2: 76.

— Another popular novelist (cf. p. 70 ante) was Charlotte Mary Yonge. (cf. Encyclop. Brit. 28: 921). She was the author of the "Heir of Redclyffe" and about 200 other works.

— Little Oak. Nov. 14, 1942. Fig trees quite green yet; Cottonwoods along the Alamo yellowing.

— drove to Little Oak on Sunday morning, Mar. 19, 1944. Worked at staking my nursery stock, young trees and vines, planted a year ago. Two stakes were driven down by each tree and vine and each stake flagged at top with a strip of white cloth, so that the man plowing with a tractor can will see and not plow up the young plants. Also I burned brush in the orchard; dug up a walnut tree in the peach-prune orchard that had started wild and, allowed to grow, had become a nuisance by being cut off at the ground each season, the shoots multiplying the next season; mended 32 feet of fence, quite a job, on the north line of orchard.

The countryside is now most lovely and tender in its spring

verture. The blue oaks, just bursting on the Aragipa Hills, exhale a fragile beauty so delicate as if the whole scene might be spoiled by a rough hand over it. The buckeyes are now riotous in their rich dark green coats, — coats so opulent and so dense as not to be remotely matched at any other season.

In full leaf now is Sambucus glauca. The cluster across the road from the fig trees has been there a long time. Well I remember its fresh spring beauty in early March when driving home behind Ceylum in the buggy, from the village, fifty years ago.

The fig trees show as yet no sign of growth, but the

walnut trees, Juglans hindsii, are just beginning to break their winter buds. The great oak, Quercus lobata, at Little Oak displays a crown thickly covered with clusters of staminate catkins. This is the surest of the year. — March 20, '44. — Flowering Plants at Little Oak. — Montia perfoliata is abundant around the oak tree and in parts of the orchard. Is it ever found away from wooded places? I think not. Down the east lane, on the little knoll, at the owl village, in the apricot orchard Calandrinia caulescens var. menziesii is now flowering — a thin colony. Well can I remember, seventy years ago, when this plant formed a crimson carpet in the orchards and in the vineyards in early March. — Mar. 20, 1944.

— Went to Little Oak on Friday, May 12, 1944. The beauty of the countryside this day is largely due to the vernal maturity of the trees. Not only at Little Oak but all about the valley the trees are now in richest green and stand against a background of green everywhere — the hills are still green, the valley fields still green — which is unusual for mid-May. But there is something more: it is a day of sunshine and cool sparkling air — and lazy wandering clouds.

Down the east lane the native vegetation is rank against the orchard fence: Echinocystis fabacea, Old-Man-in-the-Ground, is multiplying. Its climbing stems are

on the fence in many places. Though obliterated from the fields by the gang plow it finds a preserve along the fence line. So likewise may a story be told of Lathyrus which banks up luxuriously along this stretch of the lane. On the opposite side of the road, Sambucus glauca is now flowering in fine fettle. It still persists in the grain fields in spite of cultivation! — May 13, 1944.

— The native flowers that I knew well in valley flat or on hill slope were as natural to me as the air I breathed, as morning, as bright noon-tide, or dusk of evening. They were a part of the intimate life around me; they were accepted just as

much as the cattle in the field, the varied animals in the barnyard, the mill at the horse trough, the granary at at the corral, the peach orchard to the east of the house, the vineyard to the west, the tamarisk and Monterey cypress in the garden. – June 11, 1944.

– Native plants. Relatively few native plants are now found in the springtime about the old homesite at Little Oak, formerly, when I was a young lad, in the 1880s, they crowded the yard and orchard all about the house. One of these was Trifolium tridentatum, always in luxuriant growth. Well I remember seeing our old tom-cat walk nonchalantly near one of these plants in full flower, smell gingerly of one of the

heads and with wry grimace express his utter disdain. Whence in later years memory stirred, at need, to give someone the term Tomcat Clover which has now become common in the literature. – June 14, 1944.

– As said above (p. 84) native plants were once so common that little or no attention was paid to particular localities. Today I notice a fine but small colony of Solidago californica on the ditch bank of the east lane, opposite the east end of the apricot orchard at Little Oak. In the Dickie field, also opposite that point, perhaps a quarter of a mile inside the field I notice today a colony of Sambucus glauca scattered over an acre maybe. It has been there since primitive days. Also, just inside the field I

notice a few plants of Asclepias speciosa Torr. That has also been there from primitive times. The Sambucus glauca is standing amidst the ripe barley of the grain field. — June 14, 1944.

— The Seasons:

The spring, though it might be rainy, was always wonderful. The first spring-flowering plants stirred deeply the senses. Early summer, which was May and the first half of June was wonderful also; it has a marked character all its own: the golden Mariposas in the dry white grass. Summer brought the white-hot heat and trees covered with apricots shining in the sun like gold. Fall is famous for grapes and second-crop figs. And so at last comes the end (Cont. p. 88)

— Biography of Elijah Kellogg, by W. O. Mitchell. (U. C. Library, BX 7260 K4 M S.).

(Cont. from bottom p. 86) of November and Fall is gone. What is next? "Dreary-hearted December" as named by Thomson of the "Seasons". It is dull and weary and hopeless. All good has gone from the year and hopeful signs of new things not yet appeared.
– June 24, 1944.

– Gold on the apricot trees! Gold on the apricot trees! That is a thing to remember. – July 4, 1944. Little Oak.

Shining brightly in the sun; a light trade wind stirring the leaves softly.

– "Order touched with beauty." – Masefield. When first going into, when first exploring Weldon Canon its utter wildness made a lasting impression on the mind,* but vaguely, perhaps a bit instinctively there was sensed a sort of order hidden under the

* See p. 96.

wildness. Although the chaparral was made up, plainly, of many different things, all the different types in it conformed to a certain pattern in size, more or less in habit, in roughness of branching and in small leafage. At a distance a chaparral slope might look as orderly and even (on its surface) as a closely cropped lawn.

And there were other suggestions of order, less readily seen and far more hidden. What wonderful sight was the Bush Monkey flower – in full flower – one of the most interesting sights in the canon, – to see it for the first time was a great event and one never to be forgotten. After the first exclamations of delight one began to consider it more closely and

then we saw it was very like the common marsh flower on the valley floor*; closer study still showed that the flower was, although different in color and in some details, yet built on the same plan in all details of the essential organs. Here was something revealing! Here was a system! Here were plants related by expressions that could be expressed in mathematical terms and yet the two plants were very different!

—"Why does a virtuous man delight in landscapes? It is for these reasons: that in a rustic retreat he may nourish his nature, that he may constantly meet in the country fishermen, woodcutters, and hermits, and see the soaring of cranes and hear the crying of monkeys. The din of the dusty

* Cont. p. 91.

world and the locked-in-ness of human habitations are what human nature habitually abhors.— Kuo Hsi. (Sung Dynasty, 960-1280).

Aragnipa Hills

Each lateral ridge has its own individuality. As a lad some seemed to me peculiarly endowed with natural beauty; others were in a way commonplace but still individual, still with an essence all their own.

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* Cont. from p. 90. The two, we saw, are very unlike and yet there are profound resemblances. We saw how alike in all essentials of structure. If one made a diagram of the organs in the two flowers, the trivial differences disappeared completely. The resemblances were sensed by the powers of the imagination. We lads, then, half-believed with Keats (the poet) there is truth in the imagination.

School "Pieces" See p. 15.

"Say your piece", said the teacher – Hohenlinden. The author, of whom we knew nothing – ordinarily we schoolboys never knew the name of the author of a "piece" to be spoken, or at least paid no attention to the author's name – was Thomas Campbell (July 27, 1777 – June 15, 1844). Born in Glasgow he attended the University and received a good classical education. His best known poems are, perhaps, Hohenlinden, Lord Ullin's Daughter, The Soldier's Dream, The Battle of the Baltic, Lochiel & Ye Mariners of England. Gertrude of Wyoming is a longer but famous narrative. He was the proposer of London University; his vigorous efforts in its behalf as a result of it became an accomplished fact. He was elected lord rector of Glasgow University

three times (1826–1829), the third time over a formidable rival, Sir Walter Scott. Some of his phrases have become a part of English speech, such as "Coming events cast their shadows before" and "Tis distance lends enchantment to the view."

"In a war-storied time such as ours Campbell specially regains our warm regard as among the best creators of the battle ballad". – London Times Literary Supplement, editorial, June 17, 1944 (43: 295).

– Thomas Hood. "I remember, I remember." p. 281. Poetical Works. (Landsdowne Edition.)

The Plain versus the Hills.

In primitive days the plain of the Sacramento and of lower Vaca Valley was quite barren of trees, save a thin line along the creeks — or for miles the creeks might be treeless. The trees that grew up about the homesteads (planted) were almost entirely deciduous, often wholly so or rather usually wholly so save for a single evergreen or two. Likewise the native trees along the creeks were deciduous almost entirely — the willows, cottonwoods and valley oaks. Only occasionally was there an interior Live Oak.

My first trips into Gates Canon and Weldon Canon were in the winter time. The contrast made a lasting impression on my lad's mind. There was the deep dark foliage of the California Laurel; the equally rich dark green of the Interior Live Oak (Quercus wislizenii); the pale thin foliage of the Digger Pine

but still evergreen; a few Madronas; the various shrubs of the thick chaparral, almost all of them evergreen; the Maul Oak (Quercus chrysolepis) a few trees.

Native Flowers

— As a lad I was much attracted to Orthocarpus lithospermoides — it was so distinctive, — it was like knowing a superior friend. The plant tended to be solitary which increased its interest. So fine a species it was that it added some distinction to your life to know it. As I say, it was not abundant but the individuals were scattered here and there over the plain and I often met it.

— Everywhere about my home the native plants were dominant. Even in the cultivated orchard, when the new growth

— Cont. p. 131. —

— Continued from p. 88 at bottom. * "Chaotic eternity of nature," it is called by Chas. M. Doughty. See Arabia Deserta 1: 115.

— Field Weeds. — In 1874 and doubtless before and for many years afterward Hemizonia I certainly virgulaefolia was a common late spring and summer plant at Little Oak. When the hayfields were cut the ground was taken over by young growing plants of Hemizonia virgulaefolia — this tarweed practically covered the fields. It was not eaten by stock and consequently flourished. Also It is not easy, just now, to set a definite date when it disappeared from the hay fields. It was there in the fields as late as 1910 I think. None of it is to be seen at Little Oak now. It is, however, still a tenant of the

open foothills. Today a lot of it was observed on the hillslope of the low hills just north of Sid Walker ranch I think there pastured hills belong to the Walker place. It is my remembrance, too, that I saw it on the open hills near foot of Osage Cañon in the Arroyo Hills a few years ago — a very thin stand of it. — Sept. 8, 1944.

— Native Shrubs. — Today when traveling to Vaca Valley I noticed Baccharis pilularis on broken ground on Hunter Hill in the Benicia Hills and at the head of American Cañon. Everywhere in the hills proper, wherever there is broken ground, there the Coyote Brush is a local migrant. — Sept. 8, 1944.

— The magic of the grapes: see my letter to Dr. H.M. Wheeler, Sept. 25, 1944.

— Spring burst in the hills. See Men & Manners 14: 114. See U.B. 61: 64.

Spring Burst in the Aragnipa Hills, in March, 1945.

What is that lilting light on the crowns of the trees, soft and tender, yet luminous. It is like all that ever was in halcyon days. What is like that new fresh green of the slopes so smooth? It is like all old happiness that ever was brought to life again. — March, 1945.

Twice I saw the delicacy of the change from midwinter to spring in the Aragnipa Hills this season. Along the whole length of the little range the miracle expands. The Blue Oaks, the dominant tree, glow radiantly in their tender new foliage — there is almost a touch of gold in their swelling crowns. Along the slopes an exhalation of light, of vibrant cheer, animates the hills, as if all the groves joined in a happy and

light some dance: The winter is past! The winter is past!

In the hollows at the heads of cañons, the colonies of buckeyes, now in their most vivid green, set off by contrast the colorful gayety of the hills, while as a foil a few great trees of the Valley Oak, sequestered on the ridges, stretch dark limbs to the sky, their dignity as yet unshaken by the warm winds which unlocked the gaunt arms of their cousins, the Blue Oaks.

What a scene now lies in that shimmering light of the sun! In these hills all is primitive. I see not one habitation of man — there has never been one in the Aragnipa Hills. I see not a power line, not a telegraph line,* from my present view point there is not visible even a fence line. So or

* These signs of industrial man have never crossed their little range.

such green slopes, on such unspoiled woodland, new born in the spring sunlight, let elves and faery goblins play! It is a short festival, a brief play-time. This light and airy immanence of the hills, the Blue Oaks in the freshness of new leaf, lasts only a week. In that one week are stirred the gayest and happiest moodes of Nature's self in the Araquipas. Then the magic passes, it is all gone, and one must wait a whole year for its recurrence. — March, 1945.

— Praise of life on the land. — Honoré de Balzac, The Country Parson, p. 180.

— Cont. from p. 95. came in the early winter it was mainly, almost entirely the native vegetation: Leguminosae, Cruciferae, Portulacaceae, Hydrophyllaceae, Compositae and so. There must have been a dozen native clovers right around the house at home.

Before the gringo came California was one great natural garden. Inevitably, with the coming of the American and his destroying civilization, much of the more delicate phases of the native beauty (I perversely not to say) suffered and suffered severely. Gold fields, Tidy Tips and Nemophilas rioted in wide-flung sheets of color where now are grainfields and orchards.

— Sept. 11, 1945.

— Ver erat aeternum; placidique tepentibus auris,

Mulcebant Zephyri natos sine semine flores.

— Ovid.

Spring was eternal (then it was ever spring); with gentle and warming breezes, the Zephyrs caressed the flowers born without seed (the thing sown). [i.e. not sown.]

— Silva mihi delecta. — Virgil.

— We lads at Little Oak never had any bought toys. But we had plenty to do. Everyone wore, at that time, high boots. Worn out boots still had good leather legs and a great deal of it. This leather we cut into narrow strips or thongs of much length and plaited into whips of various kinds. Whips were in great demand. We needed whips in many way. We rode horses. We drove horses. We rounded up cattle. We had lots of fun. — Sept. 28, 1945.

— Writing school. Sometimes an itinerant teacher would appear and open a writing school in the evening in the school building for intensive training in penmanship for a brief period. He was always, as I remember, a master of the Spencerian method

with its beautiful curves and flourishes. He opened schools in the district schools as well as the town school. — Oct. 8, 1945.

— Sometimes the mother washes the boy's ears when he fails more or less in this duty himself. No boy likes this. A boy looks upon his ears, which he has never seen, as very special and private property where trespass is an invasion of his dignity. In this matter he feels a strong kinship with the mule. No mule, he reflects, likes to have his ears bothered. — Oct. 8, 1945.

— Follow Up.

God gives us tasses to guard or to wager,
Games to play out, whether earnest or fun,
Fights for the fearless and goals for the eager,
Twenty and thirty and forty years on.

— Harrow School Song.

— Corduroy from the Vaca Mts. cf. letter to J. M. Brazelton, 11-26-40 (Tapson Correspond)

To W. L. Jepson:

"The glory of the glowing hills Saturday startled us. Always it has been a fascinating trip but somehow this time the hills seemed to have overheard that you were coming. They celebrated! We had very bit as happy a day as you. We hadn't expected fruit as a kind of bonus 'along of being good'! It is lovely. Many many thanks.

Helen M. Wheeler, July 24, 1945. Berkeley.

– Two figures well known on the Vaca-dem road in my boyhood days: Captain T. B. Chinn and Leonard Reddick. They died about Sept. 1, 1924.

– Memories of Max Blum, in Jepson Corr., Sept. 20, 1941.

– One leaves the towns, the crowded homes of men, with his face set toward the wide spaces. Here are vaster mansions than any found in the settlements of civilization – the open hills. Pelleyo Hill has a grand solemnity; its isolation commands one's interest; its utter nakedness, its all but massiveness. its bare slopes give lingering sense of mystery.

Native Plants.

In the orchard at Little Oak, in my earliest boyhood days, Montia perfoliata was pervasive. It covered many square yards of ground with a pure stand, even and dense, and was so distinctive that it became one of the first plants to take a place in my interest. Its circular perfoliate disk beneath the raceme, made it unlike anything else, gave it a most distinctive look.

The college was set in a dense grove of Monterey Cypress. They were prosperous trees and promised a fine appearance. But by 1900 the trees were beginning to die and by 1910 were wholly gone save for one tree which appeared to be disease resistant. Later it succumbed. It was thought for long the trees in cultivation in California were killed by insect borers. But in 1927 W. W. Wagener discovered that the trees were actually killed by a cypress canker, Coryneum cardinale sp. n. Cf. Journ. Agr. Research, 58: 1:46. 1939. The borers follow afterward, attacking the dead wood. Cf. C. B. Wolf's article: "In Search of a Cypress"; separate.

- At Center School were three Oiler boys, about my own age. Joseph, Frank, William. I knew them when about seven years old. They were the sons of J. M. Oiler (a guess as to the initials, because I have not thought of him for sixty years or over). Oiler married a daughter of Arcules Hawkins and thereby got a fine ranch, the dowry of the daughter.

At school I thought of "Willie" Oiler as a mean moron or subidiot. Being good-natured he was popular with my Campbellite school-mates. His brother Frank had some brains and an independent spirit and was unpopular. I remember nothing definite about Joe (28 years old; notice of death in Vacaville Reporter Apr. 5, 1945).

All of Arcules' children were stupid, dull or unthrifty, save perhaps the youngest "Young Arcules"

who died rather early and left a child or two. Oiler, the son-in-law was stupid too but had the "big-head" a bit. All children lost their ranches save "Young Arcules". When Oiler lost his ranch he moved to Modoc county. The Reporter said son William was still living there.

—Apr. 6, 1946.

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